



Principles for poverty alleviation among the youth in Northern Uganda

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Abstract

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This article deals with the statistical data and analysis concerning poverty among the young people in Uganda. The poverty is continuously ascending, with the most affected region being Northern Uganda. The major cause of poverty in Uganda has been the "South-North divide" fuelled by poor political leadership, that divides people along the lines of politics and ethnicity. Poverty has caused many young people of Northern Uganda to resort to rebellion against the government currently in power. This has led to unending political instability and civil strife most especially in Northern Uganda. In this article attention is given to the conflict in Northern Uganda and attempts are made to propose some amicable resolutions. The discussion includes the current poverty scenario in Northern Uganda and possible strategies for reducing the poverty rate that has caused much damage in Northern Uganda.

Opsomming

Beginnels vir armoedeverligting onder die jeug in Noord-Uganda

Hierdie artikel hanteer die statistiese data en analise wat verband hou met armoede onder jongmense in Uganda. In hierdie omgewing neem armoede deurlopend toe, met Noordelike Uganda as die grootste geaffekteerde area. Die grootste oorsaak van armoede in Uganda was die "Suid-Noordskeiding" aangevuur deur swak politieke leierskap, wat die mense verdeel langs die lyne van politiek en etnisiteit. Armoede het baie

van die jongmense in Noordelike Uganda in opstand teen die huidige regering laat kom. Dit het tot ongekende politieke onstabiliteit en siviele stryd gelei, veral in Noordelike Uganda. In hierdie artikel word gefokus op die konflik in Noordelike Uganda en daar word gepoog om aanvaarbare oplossings voor te stel. Daar word ook na die huidige armoedescenario in Noordelike Uganda gekyk en na moontlike strategieë om armoede, wat groot skade in Noordelike Uganda veroorsaak het, te verlig.

1. Introduction

The twenty years of conflict in Northern Uganda between the rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and the Government have brought increased poverty among the youth of Northern Uganda. The question in this article is: What strategic plan could be implemented to alleviate the poverty among the young people in Northern Uganda that has led to unending ethnic conflict between the South and the North? In response to this question it is vital to primarily find out to what extent ethnicity, tribalism, sectarianism and war hindrances contribute to poverty as well as to identify possible measures to be utilised in addressing the existing problems. The hypothesis is "[s]ince violence has failed, dialogue must be applied". The issue of ethnicity, tribalism and sectarianism would be addressed by creating an atmosphere of "unity in diversity", that could further contribute towards poverty reduction. This article also focuses on the influence of poor political leadership that resulted in a "South-North divide" in the wake of which followed the endless war and the damages caused by it. In conclusion possible strategic guidelines to alleviate poverty among the youth in Northern Uganda are provided.

2. Definition of key concepts

The following definitions of keywords form the building blocks of this article to demarcate its meaning and contribution towards poverty alleviation.

2.1 Concept of *poverty*

Recent anthropological and sociological studies have shown that the word *poor* refers to more than merely an economic concept by encompassing such aspects as honour and social status (Freedman, 2007:27). Gustavo (1983:114) adds that the new "poor" are the alienated and the uncared for. Pieterse (2001:30) views poverty as the inability of individuals, households or entire communities to command sufficient sources to satisfy a socially acceptable minimum

standard of living. According to Banda (2005:19), the definition of poverty is rooted in failure to afford basic needs like food, shelter, medical care, education, employment and clean water.

2.2 Concept of *youth*

The term *youth* has different meanings depending on its context. The report (human development) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for Jordan in 2000 defines youths as young people between 15-29 years of age (Wright & Tropp, 2006). Sociologically youth may be viewed as a transition stage between childhood and adulthood, from dependence to independence and from being recipient of society's services to becoming contributors to national economic, political and cultural life (Wright & Tropp, 2006). In the context of this study *youth* will be defined as all young persons between the ages of 18-25, in line with the decision of the National Youth Council Statute 1993 and the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. According to the 2002 population census they constitute to approximately 78% of Uganda's 28 million people (cf. Kibanja, 2005:104).

2.3 Concept of *alleviation*

Alleviation would include the step or steps taken to reduce or remove poverty that results in lack of food, shelter, medical care, education, employment. It also manifests in terms of deprivation, injustice and marginalisation (cf. Hartmut, 2000:73).

3. The three specific barriers to development in the North

3.1 Biased political leadership

Good leadership should be competent, non-corrupt, and non-discriminative (Kaketo, 2007:34). However, ironically the political history of Uganda has been littered with corrupt and inadequate leaders. Since the rule of Milton Obote and Idi Amin in the 1970s and 1980s, Uganda has been infamous for its abuse of human rights and the deaths of over half a million people, mostly young people. Although the election of President Yoweri Museveni to power in 1986 has provided for many promising democratic reforms and a substantial decrease in human rights violations, violence and discrimination still plagues the Northern region of the country (Olanya, 2008:11). The reason for this conflict is that the people of Northern Uganda are unhappy about the government's lack of firm commitment to development in the North, and to their knowledge the government is

actively working to over-develop the South and under-develop the North. As examples they mention poor infrastructures like roads, health facilities, schools and a lack of electricity in many parts of the Northern region while the Southern region would appear to be better provided for (Olanya, 2008:12).

3.2 “South-North divide”

The political institutions and processes that operate in Uganda at present, formed by the government headed by the Southern region, have created marginalisation especially among the people of Northern Uganda. The rise and fall of oppressive military dictators and authoritarian regimes in Uganda tend to institutionalise human rights violations as a necessary measure to maintain prevailing patterns of domination. Thus, political institutions respond to the “few-tribes”, ensuring the working of the social structure is in their favour and aspiration: these few reap the reward (Razwanul, 2006:44).

The scourge of tribalism and sectarianism is still kept alive today by strong political and economic powers. Therefore, discrimination, segregation and division led to an unequal educational system and employment opportunities. Hence, the processes of impoverishment continue to grow from strength to strength among the young people of Northern Uganda (Kaketo, 2007:38).

3.3 Endless conflict in Northern Uganda

The rebel leader Joseph Kony has failed to emerge from hiding in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Peace talks between the LRA and the Government of Uganda have been abandoned, the ceasefire has not been renewed, President Museveni has again resorted to force, having obtained permission from Sudan and the DRC to seek out remaining LRA rebel fighters. The indictment of the rebel leader Joseph Kony and his fellow-four top leaders by the International Criminal Court remains an obstacle (Abandu, 2007:34).

Although Uganda made the original referral to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2003, the terms of the LRA agreement with the Government of Uganda envisage trials for the most serious crimes in a special national court (not international), with traditional forms of justice known as *mato opu't* dealing with lesser crimes. Inevitably, international groups are uneasy about any process that by-passes the International Criminal Court with regard to the trial of these rebel leaders. The rebels of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) have also refused to enter peace negotiations unless the Inter-

national Criminal Court warrants of arrest against four of their top rebel leaders are dropped and in this way perpetual conflict continues (Onegi, 2008:86).

4. Poverty scenario

4.1 Dimensions of poverty

Uganda National Household Surveys (2006-2007) reflect a general consensus that defines poverty as a lack of basic needs and services. In order to obtain a fuller picture of poverty conditions among the youth in Uganda over the years, the income as well as other relevant dimensions of welfare must be considered. Income poverty – usually measured in terms of average personal consumption expenditure – relies heavily on data obtained from national household surveys. The data are used to estimate the proportion of the youth population below poverty line, defined in terms of money value of a basket of commodities. Other dimensions of poverty may be assessed in terms of the level of access to or deprivation of basic services (Hartmut, 2000:213).

4.1.1 Income poverty

Since poverty may be defined in terms of a lack of income in relation to essential consumption needs, it may be defined and quantified. Kibanja (2005:26) sets the poverty line among the youth in Uganda in 2006 at Uganda shillings 70 000 (equivalent of US\$35) per month, computed on the basis of the price of an average food basket for the poor youths' population and youth food consumption of 2 000 kilo calories per day plus estimated consumptions of non-essential items.

4.1.2 Understanding *poor* and *ultra poor* youths in terms of their expenditure

According to Uganda's household survey (2006-2007) 64,9% of the youths live below the poverty line and only 35,1% have managed to attain the standard above the line of poverty. Kibanja (2005:27) distinguishes between *poor* and *ultra poor* youths. According to his analysis 53% can be categorised as *poor* and 11,9% as *ultra poor*. As per this definition youths that expend less than 70 000 Uganda shillings or US\$35 per month are considered as *poor* and those that expend less than 20 000 Uganda shillings or US\$10 per month are regarded as *ultra poor*. According to Kaloli (2007:32), this figure must upset any right-minded person with some kind of social

conscience to the core. This state of affairs, if reflected upon as a social task, is one of the greatest challenges facing the governments and societies of our time.

5. Poverty hint and statistics among the youth in Uganda

5.1 Poverty assessment by regions

Poverty among the youth in Uganda is not confined to one region or ethnic group. It cuts across all groups, but the concentration is manifested higher among the youth of the Northern region (Munene, 2005:22). The Northern region has consistently been regarded as least developed and most poverty ridden. The unending civil war in the North and the difficult conditions in which the majority of the youth of this region live, confirm their suffering and poverty problems. The regular cattle rustling in the North and North-East regions by the Karamojongs has caused migration of the young people to safer locations. District officials in those areas have identified victims of cattle rustling as the most desperate and vulnerable to famine and starvation. A large proportion of displaced youths live in dire poverty in the towns and villages in Lira and Soroti in Northern and Eastern Uganda respectively (Munene, 2005:23).

Table 1: Poverty incidence among the youth by regions, localities, and percentages (2005-2007) (Uganda Household Survey, 2005-2007:56)

Geographical location	Chronic poverty	Moving out of poverty	Moving in-to poverty	Never in poverty	Total %
National	64,9	46,7	56,8	14,0	100
Northern region	80,6	29,3	37,1	7,5	100
Eastern region	73,2	33,7	32,8	9,6	100
Western region	35,8	54,4	16,5	36,3	100
Central region	33,5	58,5	14,8	38,9	100
Rural area	81,2	30,7	61,2	7,8	100
Urban area	28,3	67,8	23,9	38,8	100

The poor youths in this country comprise 80,6% for the Northern region and 73,2% for the Eastern region. After that the percentage

drops sharply to 35,5% for the Central region and only 33,8% for the Western region (Kaloli, 2007:57). Therefore, the Government must focus mainly on the Northern and the Eastern regions in the mammoth task that lies ahead, but also without neglecting the poor people belonging to other regions. Co-operation with non-governmental organisations and other agencies is vitally necessary (Barrett, 2008:189).

5.2 Poverty analysis according to localities

Uganda is divided into rural and urban areas. Most of the young people live in rural areas including remote areas. The poverty rate among youth classified as poor in the countryside is 91,2% as opposed to 28,3% in the cities (Frances, 2002:13). The disparity between rural and urban areas can be expressed in terms of access to basic services by urbanites and rural inhabitants. There is tremendous inequality in the standard of living, and hence in the quality of life, in these two categories. This is reflected in their respective access to basic services (Freedman, 2007:26).

Table 2: Access to basic services in percentages
(Comp. by Frances, 2002:16)

Services	Rural	Urban
Indoor running water	14,5	76,4
Indoor flush sanitation	8,7	63,5
Electricity	6,4	80,3
Telephone	3,7	70,7
Television	15,8	99,8

5.3 Poverty description in terms of gender

Poverty and gender in Uganda are interlinked since young men and women play different roles and have different needs and face different constraints in responding to economic and the social changes and incentives. These differences arise from the fundamental imbalances in the rights and obligations between the two gender groups, in particular rights to education, employment and businesses. In these two categories female youths especially in rural areas are the victims of poverty. The majority of young women in rural areas are not allowed by their parents to engage in the above incentives for the fear that they might end up being prostitutes and the result is that they get chained up by poverty. Many of these parents engage

their daughters in early marriages in exchange for goats, cows and money. The girls have no inheritance rights, have low literacy rates, suffer from social prejudice, unfair division of labour and lack of ways out to earn money elsewhere (Cecillia, 1998:498).

5.4 Poverty and education

Worldwide a correlation between a restricted level of education and a restricted standard of living has been confirmed, i.e. with very few individual exceptions. The Uganda Household Survey 2007 reaffirms this. In this country there are also some obstacles surrounding access to educational achievement and among these is the cost of education. The amount and timing of school fees can be a significant barrier to accessing education. Transportation to and from school is still a big problem to many youths, especially in the rural areas. Poor planning and insufficient resources for studies like text books, teacher and student ratio as well as teen pregnancies cause them to drop out of school. Apart from the mentioned problems there are certain cultural or traditional practices that force young ladies to get married at an early age, especially in rural areas (Kirunda, 2005:35).

Table 3: Poverty rate according to educational level (Uganda Household Survey, 2005-2007)

Education	Male	Female	Total rate %
No education	13,6	26,9	24,3
Primary education	96,5	88,2	89,0
Secondary education	77,4	56,4	65,0
Tertiary education	56,8	21,3	37,0

Although the government of Uganda has introduced universal primary and secondary education, full support does not reach the grassroots so easily because of corrupt education officials. Therefore, corruption must be fought by all means and attention must be paid to girls' education with emphasis on rural young women as already indicated in the table above (Kibanja, 2005:38).

5.5 Poverty and unemployment

The major contributor to poverty among the youth in Uganda is unemployment. Large numbers of unemployed young men and ladies are from the Northern and Eastern parts of Uganda that are war-stricken regions. Furthermore, unemployment rates are higher in rural areas generally among the female youths (Nabushawo, 2007: 65).

Table 4: Poverty rate according to unemployment (Uganda Bureau of Statistics, 2005-2007)

Unemployment	Male	Female	Total rate %
Urban	54,0	80,4	68,1
Rural	86,7	98,0	92,6

The unemployed youths in impoverished families make up 83% of all unemployed youths in Uganda. The unemployed youths from non-poor households constitute only 17% of the unemployed total. These statistics strengthen our awareness of the desperate need of the already poor but still unemployed youths (Razwanul, 2006:371). The message is clear: their government urgently needs to “take the bull by the horns” through job creation (Toko, 2000:38). The reality, however, is that unemployment and the resultant poverty are drastically increasing in this country. The official unemployment rate was shown to have dropped from 76% in 2000 to 74% in 2003, but increased in 2004 to 79%, and in 2005-2007 rose to an undesirable 82,3% (Rizwanul, 2006:372). The majority of the unemployed are from Northern and Eastern Uganda, i.e. 75% from the North, 71% from the East, 36% from the West and 32% from the Central region (Munene, 2005:19).

5.6 Explanation of poverty in relation to orphans, street children, displaced persons and the handicapped

In the 2002 census, 10% of the young people below the age of 20 years were classified as orphans mainly due to the HIV and AIDS epidemic and civil wars. Such young people allow their close relatives to control the property left to them by their deceased parents. The relatives later misappropriate these properties, exposing the orphans to poverty. Street children/young people form a sizeable proportion of the poverty-stricken youths. Parental neglect and change in marital status together with existing household poverty often force the youngsters to leave home in search of survival. In

addition, youngsters are sent by their parents or the guardians to go and beg on behalf of the family in order to earn a living. This is common with the tribe of Karamojong. In the 2002 census 5,5% of the youths were on their own and slept in the streets while the rest remained in contact with their parents or guardians (Hartmut, 2000: 213). In the wake of these practices and in the face of such poverty follows badly neglected health care, that include the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and especially a lack of proper immunisation programmes. The absence of proper health care together with civil strife can be identified as the main causes of the increase in the number of disabled youths. The National Union of Disabled Persons in Uganda (NUDIPU) and the 2002 population census suggested that 15-17% of the youth population were disabled. This percentage excludes those mentally or emotionally disabled due to traumatism caused by civil wars (Hartmut, 2000:215).

5.7 Poverty and mental conditions

Copeland (1997:36) says that poverty and impaired mental competence or well-being very often go hand in hand with poor mental conditions. The existence of a weakened mental state may well be the result of poor nutrition, illness (especially if unattended to), alcohol or drug abuse. All of these are unfortunately capable of creating and prolonging poverty. On the other hand all of these probably are the very result of an already existing poverty. Together with this as already stated, in a certain sense a lack of knowledge and technical information/competence would result in poverty, and unfortunately, vice versa.

Apart from physically-related poverty, poverty can also exist within the mind in the form of poverty of being. Copeland (1997:37) calls the attention of the impoverished young people to the reality of the web of lies that they believe and points out that by believing them they end up being even more disempowered. He also states that this hopelessness has its roots in the distorted history of the poor and in the actions of the non-poor in making and writing history. In this way, the past can become a limitation to the future. Proper education to improve skills, knowledge and competence would allow for improved ability to deal with the future in its own right.

6. General causes and effects of poverty

The causes of poverty have been grouped under seven headings: historical, economic, governance, land, natural, personal and cultural.

6.1 National

One of the major causes of poverty in Northern Uganda has been and still is political instability. Northern Uganda has been experiencing civil unrest for the past twenty years. It started soon after the fall of the military regime of General Tito Okello who was born of the Northern region. It is still carrying on into President Museveni's regime, a man from Southern Uganda. For many years endless rebel activities, supported by the ruling regime in Sudan under President Omar Al Bashir, have continued wrecking havoc in the Northern Uganda. The rebels called themselves the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). This paramilitary group of murderers, thieves, and rapists have substantially disrupted the social fabric in Northern Uganda. Hence, a full generation of people have lived an entire lifetime in an unpredictable and deadly war zone without proper food, shelter, medical care, education and employment (Olanya, 2008:12).

According to Kasirivu (2007:46) unemployment and the lack of education are both mentioned and identified as other major causes of poverty among the youth in Northern Uganda. Powerlessness and conflict, including organised crime, are some of the contributors to poverty. Youths are uneducated, unemployed, powerless and caught up in conflict. They are poor because they are unemployed. Today in Uganda, the excluded youths promote conflict. They have no alternative projects. Hence, rebellions explode among them – violence is fought through violence. The impoverished youths are driven to violence and violence makes them poor. This is a vicious circle.

The current government of Uganda has also contributed greatly to poverty among the young people in Northern Uganda, especially the bad, weak and corrupt government together with unefficient government officials. Even now it fails to provide the Northern region with what is often referred to as adequate basic infrastructure in terms of health services, education, employment, water, electricity, sanitation, roads (especially in rural areas) and public transport. On many occasions, the government abdicates responsibility to the private sectors that do insufficient work. The state has ceased to be a gua-

rantor of welfare measures for the impoverished youth in Northern Uganda (Hickey, 2005:99).

At worst, the ruling government regime in Uganda today has caused poverty because of its system that divides the young people along political and tribal lines or lines of ethnicity, known as the “South-North divide”. In fact, only a few reap the reward. The Southerners occupy, in most instances, well-paying jobs and the majority of the Northerners are left surviving on the mercy of others. Thus, it polarises the young people of Northern Uganda. Instead of working for the good of everybody, the government chooses to segregate. Hence, the unemployed youth of Northern Uganda have decided on rebellion and crime in order to sustain life (Okot, 1995:66).

In Uganda corruption contributes greatly to poverty, sometimes referred to as the misuse of public resources and funds. Corruption is practically institutionalised. This monster is created by the greed of institutional bureaucracies. It is estimated that over 60% of funds and other resources do not reach their intended destinations (the grassroots). There are many scandals that come to the surface daily, related to illicit purchases and the sales of state property, bribes, tax evasion, ghost wages and embezzlement of money meant for health care, education and social amenities of the Northern region. Such scandals speak for themselves with regard to the type of public officials that forms part of the present government (Kaketo, 2007:54).

The grabbing of the land from the poor by the few rich and the government to establish so-called public enterprises has also added to poverty among the youth – most especially in rural areas of Home and Gulu in Northern Uganda. Uganda is an agro-based country with 98% reliance on agricultural products in the rural areas. If the resources to work with are, however, taken away, there is a likelihood of increased poverty (Frances, 2003:13).

In certain instances the impoverished young people themselves are to be blamed for their poverty, because they are lazy. They lack determination, drive and ambition. They suffer from low self-esteem and a negative frame of mind. They are unwilling to help themselves. Nevertheless, blame is also to be placed on the shoulders of the rich, which are greedy, selfish, and lacking in charity and the necessary integrity. They also mislead and deceive the poor working youngsters in terms of cheap labour (Nabushawo, 2007:48).

Apart from the problems discussed above, Uganda has also been afflicted with many diseases, including malaria, HIV and AIDS. Such diseases are acknowledged worldwide as crippling the economic growth of a country and causing unemployment (due to physical weakness) and poverty to escalate. Thousands have died so far.

Contrary to this, overpopulation and large families are also highlighted among the causes of poverty. Thus, 78% of the Ugandan population are youths aged between 15-29. The production rate is high in every family. In the rural areas, in Northern Uganda, children range between 7-12 per family and 4-7 among urban families, excluding extended families. Therefore, Uganda is already becoming overpopulated. A country with over 28 million people has 78% youths between the age of 15-29. An annual population increase of around 5% is threatening the future of the country and is slowly devouring all the fruit of development and achievements (Razwanul, 2006:381).

6.2 International

There are also global influences. While there has been much international concern about poverty in Northern Uganda, many resolutions drawn by the international conferences and seminars do not reflect what happens on the ground. Policies of the World Bank, like poverty alleviation strategies, have not directly benefited the suffering young people of Northern Uganda. Instead, they profit the minority senior officials (Izako, 1997:248). It seems that international policy makers do not consult the grassroots, who should have been planners of their own destiny and implementers for their well-being. Therefore, some policies have had adverse effects on young working people like government and private sectors' retrenchment scheme from work. Most retrenches have left workers without savings, shelter or alternative employment (Izako, 1997:249).

Ackerman (2005:74) affirms that lending and borrowing is an intrinsic or inherent feature of the global economic system, but whereas debt incurred by richer nations are sustainable, the debt of the poor countries like Uganda are not. This is becoming yet another cause of poverty among the young people. Uganda is reliant on an agricultural economy that basically produces between US\$140-160 million annually. The country has a total debt of US\$5 billion and only manages to service its debt annually at US\$200 million. This implies that every Ugandan, including the newborn, has a debt of US\$350. The amount Uganda paid in 2000-2002 against debt equals that of the health and food budget put together. Debt

strangles the country's development because there is less investment from the government in the social sector, for example in health care and education.

Uganda, like other African countries, depends on raw materials, e.g. coffee as its major export. Unlike manufactured goods from developed countries, agricultural produce fetches declining prices on the World Market. Therefore, Uganda can only buy limited goods and services in exchange for an increased volume of coffee sales to help its citizens (Kasozi, 1999:112).

The trading system of the global economy is regarded as unjust in the sense of the inclination to render the rich still richer and the poor still poorer. Uganda complains that it has liberalised its own economy while Western countries have not liberalised theirs. Therefore, poor countries like Uganda are the losers and so are the young people of Northern Uganda who cannot market their agricultural products to the Western countries easily. Thus, the benefit goes to the rich Western world. In such a context the extreme discrepancies in the distribution of the global wealth among the countries, as well as the discrepancies and inequality of the distribution of the wealth in Uganda is drastically increasing on a daily base (Badaru, 1999: 64). However, local banks encourage young working people to save more, yet they do not trust them to lend them their savings. Instead, they lend abroad and to those who stand financially tall (Bandru, 1995:36).

7. The way forward in combating poverty

7.1 Government and poverty

Many suggestions have been made about ways to remove poverty and its causes among the young generation in Northern Uganda, mainly by the government and it is followed up by non-governmental organisations, for example the church and various forms of charity-related contributions or the creation of alternative opportunities. Peace and reconciliation, unity and justice, education, job opportunities and health care are the most prominent among the factors that need to be attended to. In order for any advancement or improvement to be made possible, good and soundly principled governance would in the first place be a prerequisite. In the second place it would be necessary to support and strengthen the impoverished young people and civil society as the agents of change. Thirdly, the need for a reformed economic system would require attention (Byamukama, 2006:43).

- The Government of Uganda must assume responsibility for putting an end to conflict. It is of crucial importance that peace initiatives be focused on. By regarding steps in this direction as priorities, much can be done to end the rebel war and to minimise the accompanying poverty, unemployment and neglected infrastructure. Much can be done to restore, build and enhance economic growth. Much can be done to improve the general development, education, health care and well-being of the citizens. Ruzwanul (2006:363) emphasises eradication of poverty.
- The basic rights of young people in Northern Uganda should be protected. A human rights approach should be taken. It is required of a government to ensure that basic human rights, for example an adequate livelihood and a secured social existence and co-existence, are not being violated. Human rights would include encouragement, as well as positive involvement and reinforcement of the currently impoverished young people by opening up opportunities for future prosperity and ongoing development and personal dignity. Human rights would furthermore include individual freedom without any threatening interference on the part of third parties or the state, i.e. freedom of voicing an opinion, freedom of assembly and association, a right to political participation, and a right to vote and to be voted for (Hartmut, 2000: 215).
- The way forward demands that very special care be taken of education as a determining factor and a priority area. Education is needed at all levels, namely at primary and at least secondary levels and as far as possible at higher levels. The curriculum should range from basic literacy and numeracy to skills development and information technology. Education should have a strong vocational bias, preparing youngsters for employment where new skills are now needed. Special attention needs to be given to girls' education because many of them are lagging behind as far as education is concerned (Gerald, 1999:168).
- The need for job creation and possibilities for earning an income are also heavily emphasised. Work deserves to be properly rewarded and should provide a reasonable level of income for all. A social security policy, with a clear stipulation for minimum employment wages, can help to control and guide the labour market forces, especially in the event of those that lure young people into jobs that are poorly paid for and are without benefits and that infringe on the basic human rights of the youngsters (Nabushawo, 2007:83).

- Support to small businesses by way of loans and credit schemes and straight forward banking facilities for young people in Northern Uganda, is another way of creating employment (Bruno, 1986:52).
- Provision of affordable and accessible health care, that would include hospitals, clinics and safe medication, is one of the solutions to poverty along with education and employment. To begin with the impoverished young people of Northern Uganda would need decent, low-cost housing, good sanitation and clean drinking water. The campaign against diseases such as HIV and AIDS and support for the victims must be spearheaded by the government (Kalema, 2000:73). The saying goes: "Prevention is better than cure".
- Civil society, organisations, NGOs and the church must be engaged to support the government policies of eradication of poverty among the youth in the Northern region. This involves educating the youths so that they can make informed decisions and be prepared to take responsibility. It should also be advocated for genuine participatory democracy, or politics of inclusion, where everyone, including the ignored impoverished young people of Northern Uganda, would become stakeholders and have a say (Francis, 2003:88).
- One of government's primary responsibilities would be to combat corruption. A social security system must be based on legislation and, where possible, strengthened and extended in order to protect against poverty and deprivation as experienced by those youths who cannot find jobs, youths who cannot work because of poor health and handicaps, youths who are orphans or subjected to civil disorders, wars and displacement (Razwanul, 2006:396).
- The government should play its part in reforming the economy whether global or national. If the economic liberalisation has failed to alleviate poverty, then a social model should be supported or capital communalism adopted. Economic structural adjustment policies that do not undermine the youth but support them, should be designed. The international governance should be called upon to cancel the debts of the poorest countries (Hartmut, 2000:217).

7.2 Non-governmental organisations, society and poverty

NGOs as well as the society have a number of positive tasks to accomplish among which the following can, inter alia, be listed:

- They should continue to advocate for peace and reconciliation in order to bring to an end the unnecessary wars in Northern Uganda.
- They must embark on pressurising the government and the International Criminal Court (ICC) to drop charges against four top LRA rebels (cf. Onegi, 2008:110) for the sake of peace.
- They must play the greater role in charity activities and care especially to all the disadvantaged (cf. Okidi, 2000:66).
- The society and NGOs should criticise excessive wealth obtained by means of wrongful deeds and conduct and put advocacy on an equal footing with development programmes (cf. Joseph, 1994:107).

7.3 Youth and poverty

The impoverished young people hold one of the keys to overcoming poverty in their own hands.

- They should be better prepared to help themselves. They need to be as self-reliant as possible and they need to build their self-esteem. They need to display a positive attitude in order to use whatever assistance and support they receive from others and from institutions or government.
- The government and the community must recognise them as human beings with certain rights and with an own dignity, their strength and the ability, vitality and resilience that the young people already have must be respected. These factors are tools in their own hands, but also in the hands of government and the society, tools to be profitably utilised. Therefore, the first priority should be to support this capacity (Jackson, 1996:494).

8. Conclusion

The government and society, as a result of certain practices and malpractices, have for long marginalised, manipulated and exploited the young people of Northern Uganda for their own selfish gain. This research would like to emphasise that the government has to end the crises in Northern Uganda as soon as possible. This must be done harmoniously by involving every nationality in equal sharing of resources through full participation. The young people of Northern Uganda must be supported and encouraged by the government and all stakeholders to actively participate in all issues relating to them, their community and the country at large. Therefore, nobody should,

by either omission or commission, be handicapped in their efforts to contribute towards socio-economic and political transformation and development of the country. The responsibility of the church to be *missio Dei* should be re-emphasised and the youth of the Northern region should be involved in policy formulation and implementation as partners of development without delay.

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Key concepts:

alleviation
poverty
youth

Kernbegripppe:

armoede
jeug
verligting

